

THE AMERICAN VETERAN  
EPISODE 8, SEGMENT 3

SEPTEMBER 2005

**BENSON**

THIS HURRICANE SEASON HAS MADE US ALL MORE AWARE OF HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO BE PREPARED FOR AN EMERGENCY. AT VA, WE PLAN FOR MORE THAN HURRICANES – THE RANGE OF THREATS IS UNLIMITED. PREVENTION IS PART OF BEING PREPARED, BUT ONCE DISASTER HITS, THE VA MEDICAL SYSTEM HAS A VITAL NATIONAL ROLE IN RESPONDING.

**MICHAEL VOJTASKO, STRATEGIC HEALTHCARE GROUP**

WE HAVE TO BE PREPARED FOR WHAT WE CALL AN “ALL HAZARDS APPROACH” TO EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, EVERYTHING FROM A NATURAL DISASTER TO A TERRORIST ATTACK TO BUILDING FIRES.

**NAOMI SPINRAD, REPORTER**

MIKE VOJTASKO WORKS TO ENSURE THE VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION IS READY. AS AN EXECUTIVE AGENCY, THE V-A HAS A NATIONAL ROLE IN EMERGENCY RESPONSE – BUT THE RUBBER HITS THE ROAD AT YOUR LOCAL VA HOSPITAL.

**VOJTASKO**

WE ARE FOCUSED ON THE CONSEQUENCES, AND THE CAUSE IS IMMATERIAL ONCE THE CONSEQUENCES ARE CONFRONTING YOU. YOU RESPOND TO THE NEED AT THE TIME.

**SPINRAD**

IN TIME OF CRISIS THE V-A WILL TREAT ANYONE IN NEED.

**VOJTASKO**

WE ARE NOT GOING TO TURN AWAY A PATIENT IN AN EMERGENCY.

**SPINRAD**

IN SOME SITUATIONS, EVACUATION MAY BE THE FIRST AND BEST OPTION.

**VOJTASKO**

SO, THE DECISION IS, ARE YOU BETTER OFF EVACUATING THE PATIENT OR LEAVING THEM? AND IT IS A RISK-BASED DECISION, BUT IT IS ALWAYS BASED ON WHAT IS BEST FOR THE PATIENT

**SPINRAD**

OTHER TIMES, SHELTERING IN PLACE IS BETTER. DR. KENNETH STEADMAN HELPS COORDINATE EMERGENCY PLANNING AT THE VA MEDICAL CENTER IN WASHINGTON D.C.

**KENNETH STEADMAN, MD, WASHINGTON, DC, VAMC**

IF OUR ELECTRICITY'S KNOCKED OUT, WE HAVE BACKUP GENERATORS AND WE HAVE FUEL ON SITE. WE HAVE FOOD SUPPLIES THAT COULD GET US BY - "US" MEANING STAFF AND PATIENTS - FOR 2 OR 3 TO 5 DAYS.

**SPINRAD**

AN OUTBREAK OF DISEASE, WHETHER NATURAL OR AS THE RESULT OF A BIOLOGICAL ATTACK, WOULD SHOW UP FIRST IN THE EMERGENCY ROOM, AND IT WOULD BE HANDLED WITH STANDARD PROCEDURES FOR CONTAGIOUS DISEASES. FOR CHEMICAL AND RADIATION EXPOSURE, WASHINGTON - LIKE MORE THAN 60 OTHER VA MEDICAL FACILITIES - HAS A DECONTAMINATION CENTER.

**STEADMAN**

THE AMBULANCES AND THE BUSES WOULD OFFLOAD AND WE WOULD TRANSFER PATIENTS. WE WOULD ROLL THEM INTO THIS AREA RIGHT OUTSIDE THIS DOOR WHERE WE'D TAKE THEIR CLOTHING, TAKE THEIR PERSONAL ARTICLES, HOSE THEM DOWN OUTSIDE BEFORE THEY EVER GOT INTO THIS ROOM WHERE THEY'RE SOAPED AND WATERED AGAIN.

**SPINRAD**

YOU ALMOST HAVE A CONVEYOR LINE?

**STEADMAN**

A CONVEYOR LINE ALL THE WAY FROM THE AMBULANCE, BUS, AMBUS, WHATEVER, ALL THE WAY THROUGH TO THE TIME THEY GET PUT ON HOSPITAL STRETCHERS.

**SPINRAD**

AMBULATORY PATIENTS WALK IN. MEN ARE SEPARATED FROM WOMEN AND CHILDREN. AND THEY'RE STRIPPED DOWN, NO CLOTHES, TOTALLY NAKED, THE CLOTHES ARE DISCARDED?

**STEADMAN**

THE CLOTHES ARE DISCARDED THEY'LL NEVER GET THE CLOTHES BACK AGAIN. THEY SOAP AND WATER AND RINSE THEIR EYES. WE HAVE SOMEONE HANDING THEM TOWELS, PAPER SCRUBS, BOOTIES, SHEETS IF THEY ARE COLD, TOWELS TO DRY OFF.

**SPINRAD**

SO THIS IS READY TO GO?

**STEADMAN**  
RIGHT NOW.

**SPINRAD**

V-A TAKES PART IN NATIONAL EXERCISES LIKE "TOPOFF 3," WHICH INCLUDED A SIMULATED EXPLOSION AND BIOLOGICAL AND CHEMICAL ATTACKS. HOSPITAL STAFF MUST PARTICIPATE IN AT LEAST TWO EXERCISES A YEAR, AND ONE MUST INVOLVE MASS CASUALTIES. EVEN SO, DISASTERS BY THEIR NATURE INCLUDE EVENTS THAT CANNOT BE ANTICIPATED.

**VOJTASKO**

YOU CANNOT PLAN FOR EVERY CONTINGENCY, BUT WHAT YOU CAN DO IS PREPARE PEOPLE TO THINK AND REACT IN A CRISIS SITUATION IN A COOL, CALM, COLLECTED, COMMON SENSE APPROACH. THAT'S WHAT PULLS PEOPLE THROUGH.

**BENSON**

IN ADDITION TO HEALTH CARE BENEFITS AND MEMORIAL SERVICES THE FOURTH MISSION OF VA IS NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS. EVERY EXERCISE AND EVENT GIVES US AN OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN AND TO SERVE YOU BETTER.

COMING UP THE ANNIVERSARY OF NINE-ELEVEN.

INTERIM MEDICAL CARE: VETERANS CAN OBTAIN INTERIM MEDICAL CARE WITHOUT THE WORRY OF HAVING TO REAPPLY. CONTACT THE CLOSEST VA FACILITY FOR AN APPOINTMENT. VA WILL OBTAIN YOUR INFORMATION ELECTRONICALLY FROM VA SYSTEMS, INCLUDING THE LAST VA FACILITY THAT PROVIDED YOUR CARE.

LOCATING A MISSING PERSON: CALL 1-800-568-3317. A TOLL-FREE NUMBER FOR FINDING FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS.

**BENSON**

THE NATION HONORED THE VICTIMS OF THE SEPTEMBER ELEVENTH TERRORIST ATTACKS AND CELEBRATED THE MILITARY'S HEROIC EFFORTS IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN. THOUSANDS GATHERED AT THE PENTAGON FOR A FREEDOM WALK MARKING THE FOURTH ANNIVERSARY. SCOTT WALLACE WAS THERE.

**SCOTT WALLACE**

MEMORIES OF THE TRAGEDY ARE STILL FRESH FOR THOSE WHO TURNED OUT ON SEPT 11TH TO MARK ITS FOURTH ANNIVERSARY.

**ARMELLE TALLEC, FREEDOM WALK PARTICIPANT**

WHEN I ARRIVED TO WORK, EVERYONE WAS IN SHOCK, AND I SAID, "WHAT HAPPENED?" AND THEN WE LEFT EARLY, AND WE WERE DRIVING AND SEEING THE SMOKE FROM THE PENTAGON, AND WE WERE JUST IN SHOCK.

**WALLACE**

THOSE WHO ATTENDED HAD PLENTY OF REASONS TO DO SO.

**NATALIE WOZNIAK, NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL STAFF**

THE FAMILIES THAT LOST PEOPLE, THE PEOPLE THAT ARE OUT THERE STILL TRYING TO KEEP OUR COUNTRY SAFE, IN AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ.

**WALLACE**

BETSY BINGHAM CAME ALL THE WAY FROM OREGON TO HONOR HER SON NOW SERVING IN IRAQ.

**BETH BINGHAM**

I'M PROUD OF HIM. I THINK IT'S AN AMAZING THING THAT HE IS DOING, AND I SUPPORT HIM 110 PERCENT.

**WALLACE**

RANDY AND BETSY BEARD CAME FROM NORTH CAROLINA TO PAY TRIBUTE TO THEIR SON, KILLED IN ACTION IN IRAQ LAST YEAR.

**RANDY BEARD**

9-11 SURE AFFECTED OUR WORLD, BUT TO SHOW SUPPORT FOR OUR MEN AND WOMEN IN THE ARMED FORCES WHO PAY THE PRICE FOR FREEDOM EVERYDAY FOR US.

**WALLACE**

PLENTY OF VETERANS TURNED OUT.

**MARION ROYAL, VETERAN AND FREEDOM WALK PARTICIPANT**

I'M FOR THE HOME TEAM: THE REDSKINS, THE NATIONALS AND THE U.S. MILITARY.

**WALLACE**

MARKING A COMMITMENT TO TODAY'S SOLDIERS, THE FIGHTING MEN AND WOMEN WHO ARE TOMORROW'S VETERANS.

**IRENE TROWELL-HARRIS, DIRECTOR, WOMENS PROGRAMS**

THIS A GREAT OCCASION TO SHOW OUR SUPPORT AND THAT SO THEY UNDERSTAND THAT NO MATTER WHAT THEY'RE GOING THROUGH, THAT WE'RE THERE FOR THEM. THEY CAN SEE THAT THEY ARE BEING

SUPPORTED AND ALSO THAT WHEN THEY RETIRE OR COME BACK HOME FROM THE MILITARY THAT THE VA IS THERE FOR THEM.

**BENSON**

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE PENTAGON MEMORIAL FUND GO TO [WWW.DOT](http://WWW.DOT) PENTAGONMEMORIAL DOT NET.

ONE MORE LESSON TO SHARE IS THE IMPORTANCE OF PHOTOGRAPHING THE CONTENTS OF YOUR HOME TO ASSIST YOU WITH INSUREANCE CLAIMS FOLLOWING A DISASTER.

BEFORE WE LEAVE, ONCE AGAIN, THE WEBSITE AND PHONE NUMBERS YOU CAN USE TO CONTACT VA FOR ASSISTANCE WITH YOUR FINANCIAL AND HEALTH BENEFITS THAT MAY HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY HURRICANE KATRINA:

ON THE INTERNET: [WWW.VA.GOV](http://WWW.VA.GOV)  
FINANCIAL BENEFITS: 1-800-827-1000  
HEALTH BENEFITS: 1-800-507-4571

FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS, I'M JIM BENSON. SEE YOU NEXT TIME.

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